



Does AmeriCorps Fit Your Organization?

What is AmeriCorps? AmeriCorps is a federally-funded program that gives citizens the opportunity to engage in full-time service to their local community. Working through a grassroots network of more than 1,000 national and local nonprofit and faith-based organizations, AmeriCorps members serve communities and address local environmental, educational, public safety, homeland security, or other human needs to make communities stronger.

When was it created? AmeriCorps was created in September 1993 by President Clinton and a bipartisan majority in Congress. It continues to receive strong bipartisan support today. Since AmeriCorps follows the model of the GI Bill - rewarding those who serve - after completing a year of service, AmeriCorps members receive an Education Award to help pay for college or training.

What do AmeriCorps members do? AmeriCorps members help solve problems and make communities stronger. Members work with organizations such as the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and Boys and Girls Clubs, as well as many other national, state, and local nonprofit organizations. AmeriCorps members recruit and train volunteers, tutor and mentor at-risk youth, make schools and neighborhoods safer, build and rehabilitate homes, clean rivers and restore parks, help seniors live independently, provide health care in underserved rural and Native American communities, and provide emergency and long-term assistance to victims of natural disasters, among other things. AmeriCorps members serve in communities across America, in both urban and rural areas.

How many AmeriCorps members are serving in Nebraska? During the 2006-2007 program year, over 150 individuals participating in AmeriCorps*State programs will be given the opportunity to spend a year serving in Nebraska communities. They will earn nearly \$479,000 in education awards in exchange for over 173,000 hours of service. In addition, as volunteer leaders, AmeriCorps members leverage many more hours in other volunteer labor. Since 1999, more than 1,900 Nebraska residents have qualified for education awards totaling more than \$8.5 million.

Where do AmeriCorps members serve? Members can serve with nonprofit organizations, state and local units of government, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes.

Who can be an AmeriCorps member? An individual must be a U.S. citizen, national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S. to be an AmeriCorps member. An individual must be at least 17 years old, although some service opportunities require an individual to be at least 18. For most programs there are no upper age limits. Some programs have specific skill requests in certain areas, and others look for a bachelor's degree or a few years of related volunteer/job

experience. For others, an individual's motivation and commitment may be the primary requirement.

Who can apply for AmeriCorps funds? NVSC AmeriCorps funds can be awarded to nonprofit organizations, state and local units of government, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes in Nebraska.

Who makes the funding decisions? In the spirit of reinventing government and partnership, two-thirds of all AmeriCorps program funds from the Corporation for National Service at the federal level flow directly to the states to a "state commission." The Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission (NVSC) is Nebraska's state commission. The NVSC selects, monitors and provides training and technical assistance to AmeriCorps programs. The NVSC is an independent Commission appointed by Governor Dave Heineman.

What does an AmeriCorps grant pay for? There are two kinds of AmeriCorps grants: Operating grants and Education Awards Program grants. Operating grants pay for member living allowances and benefits, member training, staff costs, operating costs, evaluation and administration. The Corporation for National Service will pay for a certain portion of these costs, while the local agency hosting the program is responsible for the remaining portion (For member support costs - federal funds 85%, grantee provides cash match of 15%. For operating costs, federal funds 67%, grantee provides cash or in-kind for 33%) An Education Awards Program grant provides up to \$400 per full-time member to help support program operations. Agencies applying for Education Awards Program grants must already have the majority of their operating expenses covered by other funding sources. In addition to both kinds of grants, the Corporation for National Service makes Education Awards available to members who complete their terms of service.

How much do AmeriCorps members get paid? Members generally receive a living allowance of about \$800 per month (before taxes). Members serving in full-time positions for 10-12 months will receive \$10,900 for the 2006-2007 grant year, and \$11,100 in living allowance payments for the 2007-2008 grant year. Members also serve in part-time and summer positions. Members serving in a full-time capacity may be eligible for health care coverage and child care reimbursements. After they complete their terms of service, full-time members receive an education award of \$4,725. Other members receive a pro-rated award. The award can be used to pay for the costs of attending an institution of high education or to pay back qualified student loans. Members who already have student loans may qualify for postponement, or forbearance, of the repayment of your loans during their service, and the education award will help them pay off qualified student loans when they are finished.

How much does it cost to run an AmeriCorps program? The cost is in part determined by the amount of funding that you are able to request and receive from the Corporation for National Service. The size of an AmeriCorps operating grant is determined by the number of members that you request. The maximum grant that you can request will be what the Corporation calls the "average cost per full-time equivalent AmeriCorps member" multiplied by the number of full-time equivalent members you request. For 2006-2007, the average cost per full-time equivalent

member cannot be above \$12,600. For example, if you request 20 full-time members, your maximum grant will equal $\$12,600 \times 20 = \$252,000$.

Where do the agencies' matching funds come from? An AmeriCorps program is required to match the AmeriCorps grant at about 20%. For example, a program receiving a \$256,000 grant will need to provide approximately \$50,000 in matching funds, cash and in-kind. Matching funds come from many sources. Matching funds for member living allowance costs must be cash and non-federal. Matching funds for operating costs can be cash or in-kind, federal or non-federal. Multi-site programs typically require that each host site (the agency that hosts an AmeriCorps member) contribute a certain amount of the matching funds.

How many AmeriCorps members can an agency request? Typically, AmeriCorps programs in Nebraska involve at least 10 full-time equivalent members. During the 2006-2007 program year, the smallest program in Nebraska will involve 8 members.

What if I only want to involve one or a few AmeriCorps members? You have two options. You can find an agency to apply for and manage the funds (as a fiscal agent) that would then place the members at host service sites throughout a community, county, region or statewide. And/or you can contact the Corporation for National Service State Office, which manages AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and Senior Service Corps programs (e.g., Retired Senior Volunteer Program). There are typically 25 AmeriCorps*VISTA members serving in Nebraska at any point during the year. For more information, contact Jim Pace at (402) 437-5474.

What if I only want the help of a group of members for a short-term project? Again, you have two options. You can contact the AmeriCorps program closest to your location to see if all or some of their members would be available for a short-term service project. And/or you can contact the North Central Region Campus of the AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), located in Denver, CO. NCCC projects must be team-based with adequate work to support a group of 10-15 members for a period of 6 weeks (approximately 40 hours of work per week per member). Project sponsors need to provide members with food and safe housing for member during the project. For more information, contact Jennifer Jones at (303) 844-7437, or at jjones@cns.gov.

When does the AmeriCorps program/contract year begin? An AmeriCorps program's contract year typically lasts for one year and begins in September.

For how long can an agency receive AmeriCorps funds? The Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission (NVSC) is committed to funding AmeriCorps programs for at least three years, assuming annual demonstration of sufficient progress towards meeting program objectives and funding availability. Typically after the first and second years of funding, the program submits a continuation application. After the third year of funding, the program submits a complete application, which is the same application that is completed by programs that have never received AmeriCorps funds from the NVSC. Programs may apply for formula funds for a total of 6 years.

Which agencies in Nebraska are receiving AmeriCorps funds? For the 2006-2007 program year, AmeriCorps programs are funded at Lutheran Family Services (sites in Omaha, Lincoln, Ashland, and Grand Island), Lincoln Action Program (sites at many non-profits in Lincoln and Lancaster County), City of Lincoln (sites throughout the city of Lincoln), Habitat for Humanity of Omaha, Inc. (Omaha) and UNMC's Munroe Meyer Institute (statewide). Feel free to contact these agencies if you want to learn more about their programs.

How do I apply for AmeriCorps funds?

Begin your application process by answering the following questions:

- What critical needs does your proposed program address? How will they do this?
- What makes this AmeriCorps program a “value added” to our normal efforts as an agency?
- How will your program recruit, train and engage AmeriCorps members?
- Who are the potential community partners in collaboration with your programs?
- How will you meet the matching requirements for a federal program? (AmeriCorps programs require 33% local cash or in-kind match for program costs and a 15% cash match for member living allowances).
- How will you measure direct and demonstrable results of your program?

Applications will be available for the 2007 – 2008 grant year starting September 25, 2006. To obtain an application, please visit our website first at <http://www.nvsc.ne.gov> where you can download the complete application in PDF format. You may also call, fax or e-mail us with your name, the name of your organization, address, phone, fax, email and indicate that you would like to receive the application for AmeriCorps program funding.

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More Information: For more information about AmeriCorps, visit <http://www.americorps.org>